

Email from Barry Wood, October 9, 10, 2003

Additional Comments on Origin of Joseph Langford

We do have real, contemporaneous documents, in the form of the land patent, the 1777 oath of allegiance, and at least one lawsuit -- all of which place Joseph Lankford in Pittsylvania County just before his appearance in Kentucky -- and nothing in North Carolina. This is more than adequate proof to me that he lived in Pittsylvania before moving to Kentucky. From what I know of the lawsuit against Joseph just after he left for Kentucky, it gives no hint that he had somehow moved to North Carolina for a period of time before going on to Kentucky. If that were the case, you would expect the debt that was the basis of the suit to have been contracted in NC rather than in Pittsylvania.

This is why I'd prefer that you say Joseph "came from Pittsylvania County, Virginia (or possibly North Carolina) to Kentucky," rather than treating Virginia as just a possibility. The Old Dominion has practically all of the evidence in its favor.

The only contrary source is the sketch on James F. Lankford in the History of Clay County, printed over a hundred years after the fact. This very sketch is exceedingly unreliable, because it contains the story about Walker's wife being Molly Williams rather than Mary Warren. None of the details of this story whatsoever appear to be confirmable, and many of them conflict with the known information about the family. (See Ida-Rose's book, pp. 65-67.) Take, for example, this item about Walker Langford being in the Seminole Wars in Florida. (There were two series, but let's suppose that this is the 1818-1819 war.) Assuming that the 1769 birth year is right for Walker, that would make him almost 50 at the time of the war -- pretty old to go soldiering through the swamps and courting the daughter of an Alabama slaveholder. Also, since nine of his ten children were born BEFORE the first Seminole War, this particular fairy tale is really fractured. There were some other Indian Wars in the 1790's, and I suppose that there's the bare possibility that Walker was involved in those. I am certain...that the statement in the Clay County History that Walker's father came straight to NC from Scotland is bunk. I have three NC lines of my own and have spent quite a few years researching in various NC counties from Halifax to Wilkes, and have looked at a lot of statewide indexes. I have never run across any traces of Langfords there in the relevant period except for the James/John/Thomas crew who were in Surry / Stokes Counties when Joseph was in Caroline & Pittsylvania Counties, Va. So here is another instance where the Clay County history story has not been confirmed in the actual contemporaneous records.